

trustee for all bankruptcy cases filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana's Billings Division. Judge Thomas also helped shape future lawyers by serving at Rocky Mountain College for over a decade as an adjunct instructor in law.

On July 19, 1995, recognizing Judge Thomas's outstanding record, President Bill Clinton nominated him to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The U.S. Senate confirmed Judge Thomas in January 1996, and he served as a judge for nearly two decades, before becoming chief judge on December 1, 2014.

Throughout his impressive career, Judge Thomas has earned the confidence of his colleagues and the American people. He is a respected leader who is trusted for his sound judgment and integrity, as well as beloved for his warm personality and wit. These qualities landed Judge Thomas on President Barack Obama's short list of candidates to replace Justice John Paul Stevens on the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010.

Thanks to his extraordinary commitment public service, his intelligence and legal acumen, and his commitment to justice, Judge Thomas is a credit to our Nation's judiciary. His fairness on the bench, along with his tireless work ethic and compassion, sets a model for all of us.

I applaud his many accomplishments and hope my colleagues will join me in congratulating Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas on attaining 25 years on the Federal bench.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### VERMONT STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY CONTEST FINALISTS

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD some of the finalists' essays written by Vermont high school students as part of the 11th annual "State of the Union" essay contest conducted by my office. The material follows:

###### FINALISTS

ALEXANDER SHRIVER, BRATTLEBORO UNION HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR

On November 8th, 2016, the American people exercised their most basic democratic freedom and decided to elect Hillary Clinton as their President. According to CNN Politics, Clinton won the majority of the 138 million votes cast. If U.S. democracy stayed true to its ideal of equality, Clinton would have been elected. Instead, the 2.9 million votes which gave Clinton the edge meant nothing—those voices unheard and disrespected. Donald Trump was placed in office.

Writing the Constitution, the founding fathers struggled to find a fair way to elect a President and ultimately created the Electoral College. Instead of relying on a popular vote, this system, along with the infamous Three-fifths Compromise, was built to appease the opposition of southern slaveholders worried the more populous North would control the country and outlaw slavery. Since its inception, it has contradicted the peoples' decision in five elections, including 2016.

As horrible as its origins are, some argue that the Electoral College still protects the interests of smaller states where people might not otherwise be heard. They argue the antiquated system forces candidates to campaign in less populous areas, protecting their importance. However, the Electoral College does not fulfill this purpose. Consider the areas Donald Trump visited in his 2020 campaign: he never traveled to states like Vermont, Wyoming, North Dakota, Rhode Island, or Montana. This is the kind of disproportionate attention the Electoral College is supposed to prevent, but because of their low vote count and poll's suggesting a large polarization towards one candidate, these states were not prioritized.

330 million people live in the U.S., almost none of whom have had any sort of interaction with a presidential candidate. Most citizens learn about presidential campaigns through the media, online campaigning, and events like nationally televised debates. Therefore, even if the Electoral College did force equal attention to every state, it makes no difference because of the manner in which citizens make their voting decisions.

In the Electoral College, some votes count for more than others. Each state has two voting delegates from the Senate and at least one member in the House of Representatives regardless of their population, automatically giving smaller states more voting power. According to the University of North Carolina, a vote in Alaska is about 2.42 times more valuable than the average vote, while a Californian vote is only 87% as valuable as the average. Furthermore, in states where the vast majority of people vote the same way, each individual vote is less important than in a more politically diverse state. Because its original purpose of protecting small states is unnecessary, the Electoral College only serves to devalue some votes.

The best solution to promote a more pure democracy is to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with a popular vote. The only factor in determining the President would be the will of the people. There are many ways the American democracy needs to improve, so let's start with its most fundamental institution.

STEPHIE SKI, WINOOSKI HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR  
ANTIRACISM

"To be black and conscious of anti black racism is to stare into the mirror of your own extinctions" by Ibram X. Kendi. The assassination of George Floyd showed me that my life could also be taken away at the knees of a police officer. As a black woman, it felt as if I had a danger in my chest, that I couldn't pull out, I could only watch it bleed for nine and a half minutes. Despite the horrendous police brutality, I believe that our generation has the power to remove racist thoughts, beliefs, and actions in this world. The only way to remove racism is to become an antiracist.

My definition of antiracist is someone that actively chooses to be against racism. It takes learning about structural racism and one's own implicit bias and privilege. According to PNAS, Between the ages of 25 and 29, black men are killed by police at a rate between 2.8 and 4.1 per 100,000. Stephan Clark, a young man that was standing in his grandmother's yard, holding a mobile phone. The police shot him 20 times, they assumed Clark was holding a weapon because his skin is seen as a weapon. This type of scenario is not the first nor is it the last unless we change it as a country. Based on the National Equity Project, Structural racialization refers to institutional practices and structural arrangements that lead to racialized inequities Equity is when every

individual or group of people receives the right amount of support based on their needs. We need to work on providing racial equity in our country.

Since the minority communities have been built to be inferior to be majority communities, it is hard to survive in a crisis. We have to understand the 400 years of nightmares black people have lived through because it impacts our lives. Based on The Washington Post, black Americans were 37% more likely to die from Covid19 than whites. As a black woman, this statistic scares me because it is implying that my race will be the reason I am more likely to die from Covid19 and not my health. As a member of The Winoski Students for Anti Racism, we are demanding that SRO officers be removed from our school because of the institutional racism the police system was built on. Two thousand twenty was the last march to demand BLACK LIVES MATTER, my life matters.

We have to mandate Culture and Community class for middle and high school. That class will focus on teaching students about race, racism, identity, equity, biases, privilege, and slavery. We need social workers accompanying police officers to a situation believed to be racially motivated. We also need to support anti racist organizations in the U.S.A. Encourage states to at least have one organization that prioritizes anti racism. In order to save the world from this racist pandemic, we have focused on targeting racism.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Roberts, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Office laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 612. A bill to require the Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide certain information to medical center staff and homelessness service providers of the Department regarding the coordinated entry processes for housing and services operated under the Continuum of Care Program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. CRAMER, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 613. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy and to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary to provide service dogs to veterans